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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 000467

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [RU](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: RUSSIAN FOREIGN ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS LOOK BETTER ON PAPER

CLASSIFIED BY: TRACEY A JACOBSON, AMBASSADOR, EXE, DOS.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: According to the Russian embassy, Russia plans and implements its assistance to Tajikistan in a basic manner that is politically driven, does not take account of development needs, and relies excessively on the Tajik government for distribution. Russian diplomats share our frustration with Tajik officialdom's pervasive corruption and sense of entitlement to unconditional aid. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On 20 March, Poloff and USAID representatives met with Russian Embassy First Secretary Alexander Averin to discuss possible coordination between the embassies to better implement humanitarian aid efforts in Tajikistan. Averin expressed interest in pursuing coordination, noting the difficult and problematic political environment in Tajikistan. Averin cited corruption, lack of oversight, overlapping efforts, and unrealistic expectations by the Tajik Government as examples of the problems Russian assistance efforts face. Averin agreed on the need for continued consultations with the U.S. Embassy regarding cooperation, and expressed interest in the U.S. model of contracting non-governmental organizations to do the leg work of the USG's aid programs.

¶3. (SBU) Russian Federation aid to Tajikistan is, in terms of planning and implementation, still in its infancy. Averin said that, no matter what the particular program was, the Russian planning model was simply to throw money where the Embassy, or more often Moscow, felt it was needed. The same was true for their food assistance programs, though aid deliveries were usually negotiated at meetings in Moscow. Recent Russian deliveries of food aid to Tajikistan were left to be distributed via the Government of Tajikistan, which had little capacity to do so. Averin acknowledged this process had problems, and listened with interest to USAID representative's description of the USG model that contracts local and international non-governmental organizations to track and distribute aid supplies. He commented that "it sounds expensive."

¶4. (SBU) Averin complained about the corruption rife in the Tajik government and the need to monitor the distribution of assistance as well as account for where and to whom distribution took place. Averin was unfamiliar with many of the international aid community's activities in Tajikistan, asking about the roles of multilateral assistance planning groups that meet regularly in Dushanbe, but also noting that coordination helped donor countries to ensure that foreign aid was reaching its intended recipients. [Note: the Russian Charges d'Affaires regularly attends the Principles' Group meeting in Dushanbe

which discusses relief and aid programs, coordinating activities of embassies in Tajikistan, indicating a possible disconnect within the Russian Embassy]. Averin mentioned a Russian embassy requirement to gather data on donor activities for reporting to Moscow, which indicated both a strong interest in understanding USG and other donors' motives and activities. Averin said there was very little in the way of Russian social development programs in Tajikistan. The Russian government focused its assistance more towards commercial infrastructure that suited the needs of Russian businesses interested in currying favor with the Tajik government, rather than stimulating local economic development.

15. (C) Averin expressed some frustration with the expectations of the Tajikistani Government. He cited the Sangtuda I hydroelectric station, possible future hydropower stations, and projects such as a Russian-built business center and the new Hyatt Regency as examples of Tajik expectations that Russia would contribute to projects in Tajikistan while getting nothing in return. Interestingly, he also cited the presence of the 201 Motorized Rifle Division in this context, saying the Tajiks expected it to remain permanently while it had come to Tajikistan only to assist with stability and support the central government here when President Rahmon's government was at its weakest, following the Civil War.

16. (C) Comment: We are encouraged by Averin's expression of interest in continuing a dialogue on coordination of humanitarian efforts, and see this meeting as a chance to open doors with the Russian Embassy as well as, possibly, help alleviate their reflexive suspicion of all U.S. activities in

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Central Asia. Clearly, Russian assistance efforts are plagued with problems of planning and implementation. Averin's comments on dealing with the Tajik government may reflect growing Russian frustration with Tajikistan's manipulations of its traditional foreign friends. End Comment.
JACOBSON